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INDICE

Saggi

- CONOR FAHY, *The Printed Book in Italy*
Edited by Neil Harris 7
- ROGER CHARTIER, *Qu'est-ce qu'un livre?* 29
- SHANE BUTLER, *La question de la page*
Avec un appendice, «Nostalgie de la page», de José Antonio Millán 45
- ANTONIO CORSARO, *L'autorialità del revisore. Intorno a una raccolta di rime di Michelangelo* 58
- GIOVANNI BIANCARDI, *Nella selva delle stampe pariniane* 75
- LUCIANO CANFORA, *La «strana lettera» ad Antonio Gramsci* 86

Foro. *Le volontà dell'autore*

- DANIEL FERRER, *Le Pays des trente-six mille volontés, ou «tu l'auras voulu»* 97
- CLAUDIO GIUNTA, *La filologia d'autore non andrebbe incoraggiata* 104
- CRISTINA URCHUEGUÍA, *La autorización y la voluntad del autor* 119
- PAOLA ITALIA, *«As you like it». Ovvero di testi, autori, lettori* 129

Testi

- Setting by Formes. *The Explanation of Alonso Víctor de Paredes (1680)*
Edited by Francisco Rico y Pablo Álvarez 143

Questioni

WENDY J. PHILLIPS-RODRÍGUEZ, La necesidad de contaminarse: (sobre <i>The Pleasures of Contamination</i> de David Greetham)	155
CHASE ROBINSON, Enigmi nella sabbia	167
Filologie sotto esame:	
FRANCESCO BAUSI, Settant'anni di filologia in Italia	175
ANDREA FASSÒ, Ist die Romanistik noch zu retten?	192
MASSIMO BONAFIN, L'etnofilologia ci salverà?	213
FRANCESCO BENOZZO, Si salvi chi può!	224

Rassegne

Pietro G. Beltrami, *A che serve un'edizione critica?* (INÉS FERNÁNDEZ-ORDÓÑEZ), p. 237 · William Robins, ed., *Textual Cultures in Medieval Italy* (MADDALENA SIGNORINI), p. 242 · Dante Alighieri, *Opere*, vol. I, a cura di Claudio Giunta e altri (NICOLÒ MALDINA), p. 246 · Lotte Hellinga, *William Caxton and early printing in England* (CLIVE GRIFFIN), p. 254 · Mario Garvin, *Scripta manent. Hacia una edición crítica del romancero impreso (siglo XVI)* (GIUSEPPE DI STEFANO), p. 259 · Roger Chartier, *Cardenio entre Cervantès et Shakespeare* (FRANCISCO RICO), p. 266 · Fernando Bouza, *Hétérographies* (JONATHAN THACKER), p. 268 · Trevor J. Dadson, *Historia de la impresión de las «Rimas» de Lupercio y Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola* (MARTA LATORRE PEÑA), p. 271 · Daniel Ferrer, *Logiques du brouillon* (HANS WALTER GABLER), p. 276 · G.T. Tanselle, *Bibliographical Analysis. A Historical Introduction* (ALBERTO MONTANER), p. 281

PABLO ÁLVAREZ**

On Casting off Copy, and other Necessary Rules

It is unlikely that type is always available in sufficient quantity in a particular font so that it can be set without casting off. Because, if one is setting type for a book in folio, which ordinarily consists of gatherings of three or four sheets, or a book in quarto, which almost always consists of gatherings of two sheets, it is not likely that there will be enough type in the font for the operation to be conducted without casting off. Whenever it is possible to avoid casting off, so that the pages are set one after another in their proper order, no other kind of setting can be more balanced and pleasant to see. But this delightful experience is missing in a book that was set by casting off, because, since those doing it are not angels, it is unavoidable that sometimes the casting off ends up being either too short or too long. Therefore, when one has to compact the casting off which is too short by inserting apostrophes to indicate the omission of a letter or letters, and that which is too long by inserting extra spaces (unless some compositors use other ugly and forbidden methods, which I do not specify so that they can be ignored if possible), the printed page will look pretty ugly, forcing readers to put the book aside and leave it unread. And this unpleasantness is so real that I know of a printing shop that moved from Holland to Spain (and still exists today), whose fonts did not include apostrophes to prevent the compositor from using them. This is however a choice I disapprove for many reasons, which I should be happy to give if asked. Indeed, it is necessary that the printer know how to cast off anything he is assigned, and in order to do it properly, he can take a look at the following guide lines.

In order to print any work or book in the formats mentioned above, the first thing the compositor must do is to determine which pages make up the forme, so that he knows which ones must be cast off. Let us assume that he wants to set the type for a gathering of three folio

** Neil Harris and Cathleen A. Baker have greatly improved the legibility of this translation, saving me of many errors. I am also very grateful to the *American Printing History Association* for supporting my research on the Spanish printer Alonso Víctor de Paredes. In 2008 the APHA granted my colleague Keli E. Rylance and myself a fellowship to conduct research on one of the two extant copies of Paredes's *Institución, y origen del arte de la imprenta, y reglas generales para los compondores* (1680), which is held at the Providence Public Library.

sheets, of which the innermost forme, which is normally the first to be set, contains pages six and seven. Therefore, it is necessary that the first five pages are calculated or cast off. If the compositor needs to set the type for a book in quarto, consisting of gatherings of two sheets, the first forme to be set will contain pages six and seven, and ten and eleven; therefore, he must calculate or cast off the first five pages, and after setting the type for the following two pages, again calculate pages eight and nine, finishing the forme by setting the type for pages ten and eleven. These examples I have described can be applied to other cases in which one must cast off any sort of gathering, including imprints in octavo and in sextodecimo.

If one has to cast off lines of verse, it is not difficult at all, since the counting is done just by casting off each verse as one line, except for drama, where one must pay attention to the entrances and exits, to verses split between two of three speakers, and to verses which cannot be accommodated in one line but have to be set in two or three lines.

If the copy to be cast off is printed, showing a pattern we can replicate line by line, there is no difficulty; but if not, the compositor must set the type for some lines to see whether he can obtain seven lines out of eight, five out of four; in other words, based on whatever pattern we choose, the casting off must be done by going either from more to less or from less to more, and I don't think it is necessary to treat these calculations in detail.

The most challenging situation, in which one appreciates the skills of the printer, is when the copy is a manuscript. Because, even though the handwriting might look very uniform, it is likely that some portions of a paragraph or of a page are more widely spaced or compressed than others. In this case, what I normally do, if the paragraph is small, of twelve or thirteen lines, is to cast off the letters of a line that is neither among the most widely spaced nor among the most compressed, which represents a middle point between the two extremes; and let us assume that in this line I count forty-four letters, and that the lines I must set contain no more than thirty-six; counting from thirty-six to forty-four we end up with eight extra letters per line in the copy. Eight times four equals thirty-two, which makes a line minus four letters, and then in this case I will say that «it comes with four missing letters,» and considering these four missing letters we need to decide whether to add a line at the end of the paragraph or of the page. If the paragraph or the page itself is large and the letters are not uniform, I have always cast off the letters of three lines taken from different sections of the page, and if the first line has, for instance, fifty-two letters, the second forty-six, and the

third, only forty, I say: six extra letters from the first line are missing in the third line, so that all three lines should be equal to the second line, which contains forty-six letters; and I estimate that the lines of that page will more or less contain this number of letters, and according to this calculation, I do the casting off. Thus, for the setting of the page, let's say that each line will contain fifty-four letters, which are eight more lines than the forty-six of the copy; seven times eight equals fifty-six, which makes just a bit more than a line: then I will say that the casting off should be done as six out of seven. Now, we need to see whether in the copy anything has been erased or added, either between the lines or on the margin, which we call *lardones* [«bulges»]. In the latter case, we must rely on the good judgment of the person who does the casting off, who may calculate to what extent each line can incorporate these *lardones*, or cast off the letters of the *lardones*, or just follow the method he considers the best. And when casting off the lines that make up each page, the compositor should write with pen and ink a note, 2.A. or 3.B., etc., which designates the page it will become after casting off and setting. And if the page contains the number of the leaf, as the odd pages always do, while in many works the even pages also have a page number, we should add these numbers to the note as follows: 3.C.10. And this is the method the compositor should apply to cast off any given work.

Once a gathering is cast off, and when one is going to set the pages that have been cast off, it is necessary to know how to adjust them so that nothing is missing or redundant; this is what we call «making the conclusion». The most common method is to cast off the first five pages of the gathering, of which the first to be set is page five.¹ After setting a few lines of this page, I check how they look. If they look fine, I keep setting the type until I complete the first or second paragraph, or the end of the page, and then see how it has come out. If there is a small excess of material, a circumstance known as «compressed,» one must occasionally insert an apostrophe; if the overrun is large, one must re-cast off the previous four pages, since it often happens that some parts might have been cast off short and others long. If this is the case, one must balance everything by removing some lines from the beginning of page five so that they are inserted at the end of page four, adjusting them in such a

¹ Here Paredes seems to contradict himself, since he has previously described hypothetical settings for a folio in 6s and a quarto in 8s, in which, in both cases, setting the innermost forme means beginning with page 6. Of course his phrase is that the innermost forme is «normally the first to be set», but nevertheless a small contradiction does appear.

way that all the typesetting looks uniform. Because there are some compositors who do not dare exceed the limit marked by the notes, and so adjust each page according to the same. Therefore not only do they have to struggle all the time, but they also make the setting look far too ugly, for example, if page five is cast off short and page four long, the latter will include many spaces, and page five will include many apostrophes, which is notoriously an eyesore and shows the printer's carelessness. If, unfortunately, all the casting off is short, one must use apostrophes and some abbreviations, such as N.S. instead of *nuestro señor*, Don D. San S. and so on and so forth, always making sure that the pages do not contain an extra line, which is a very bad thing. However, if the necessity is such that we cannot avoid adding an extra line, one should make sure that the page on the verso carries the same number of lines, because it is unacceptable if page three, let's say, has thirty-eight lines and page four, thirty-nine. If the casting off is long, so there is a shortage of material, it is necessary to insert two or three spaces around each comma, to avoid using apostrophes, and to avoid from shortening words, while, in adjusting the pages, it is necessary to follow the same principles I described when the casting off is short.

If it is necessary to insert many spaces when justifying a line, be aware that when inserting commas, colons, semi-colons, exclamation marks, questions marks, and the closure of a parenthesis, it is permissible to add one space before and two after these punctuation signs. But when opening a parenthesis, one must add two spaces before and one after. If there is a full stop, before inserting spaces elsewhere, it is permissible to add a quad.

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